

Application Serial No. 09/995,662
Reply to Office Action dated December 4, 2003

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In view of the amendments to the claims and in view of the following remarks, reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Initially, the Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for his detailed analysis of this application, as well as his indication of allowable subject matter. At present, the Examiner has indicated claims 33-66 to be allowable and claims 7, 22, 23, 25 and 32 to contain allowable subject matter. In fact, claims 1-19, 21 and 24-32 have only been rejected in a provisional manner under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-20 of commonly owned copending Application Serial No. 09/930,294. With regards to this rejection, please note that the copending application was previously abandoned. As the obviousness-type double patenting rejection was made provisional because conflicting claims had not been, in fact, patented, withdrawal of this rejection based on the abandonment of the prior case is seen to clearly rectify any potential double patenting issue. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that all of these claims should be in clear condition for allowance.

The only prior art applied in this application concerns claims 67-69. Although the Applicant does not necessarily agree with the positions taken by the Examiner in rejecting these claims, in order to further the prosecution, these claims have been canceled.

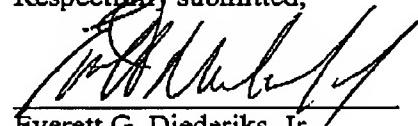
Finally, the Examiner has brought to the Applicant's attention three minor errors in claims 7, 25 and 32 respectively. Each of these claims has been amended in the manner suggested by the Examiner such that withdrawal of these objections is respectfully requested.

All the above-identified changes were discussed with the Examiner on February 26, 2004 and again on March 3, 2004. In fact, the Applicant appreciates the Examiner's willingness to amend claims 7, 25 and 32 and cancel claims 67-69 by Examiner's

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Amendment in order to place the application in condition for allowance. However, it is understood that the application was not readily available to the Examiner such that a written response was requested to avoid the need to pay any extension of time fees. Regardless, based on the amendments made to the claims and the agreements reached with the Examiner, it is respectfully submitted that the application should now be in clear condition for allowance. Therefore, allowance of the claims and passage of the application to issue is respectfully requested. If the Examiner should have any additional concerns regarding the allowance of this application, he is cordially invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided below to further expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,



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